1: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

estimate of the number of boats operating in 1946 would be as follows:

Bahrein	150
Kuwait	100
Darin, Qatif, Jubail	30
Trucial coast, Qatar, and Persian ports	250
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Manning these 500-odd craft were probably not over 10,000 men.

In Oman a strange balance of labor has been set up by the coincidence of the pearling season with the date harvest. Starting about June there is a migration of men northward from the Batinah Coast to the Trucial Coast; these men work the pearl fisheries. Some go north in caravans, others sail up in their *bedens* and other dhows. Opposed to the flood of men who make this temporary migration is a counter-migration of women who move southward from the Trucial Coast to the Batinah Coast; these women are hastening to the date groves for the date harvest. Often the women journey southward on the caravans which are returning from carrying the men to the Trucial Coast. Several months later, in September, the journeyers start the return home.

Bertram Thomas states that a considerable percentage of the army of men annually migrating northward to the Trucial Coast is composed of slaves.[17] These Batinah contingents are usually accompanied by a tribal agent who enlists them with some pearling *nakhoda*. The slaves are the best divers, as they have been at it from youth; freemen usually work the ropes in Oman. Slave divers are noted for their lack of fear of diving into deep water or into muddy water containing weeds. So great is the need for labor in the Trucial pearleries that boats sail into the Gulf from as far away as Socotra to join the pearl fishing.[18]

Pearl fishing is a seasonal occupation, as the divers must wait for warm summer water before starting to dive. Probably few people realize there is a winter in the Persian Gulf, and that the water gets so cold that swimming for periods of over five minutes is extremely chilling. In Hasa Province it is not uncommon

[17] Bertram Thomas, *Alarms and Excursions in Arabia* (London, 1931), p. 238.

[18] Ibid., p. 143

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a bare minimun, surely, and no more than a nakhoda's right, but the merchants' answer was that if the nakhodas could make new rules, so also could they; and they had the real power. I do not think the attempt of the nakhodas got them very far.

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While the dates are generally carried both to India and East Africa on a freight basis, nearly all other cargo is bought to the ship's own account and peddled to best advantage. The merchants have a substantial share in the dhow's earnings, apart from the sailor's own ventures, which are limited to what they can stow in a sea chest on the poop. As far as I was able to discover -- and I was more than twelve months sailing in deep-sea dhows -- the freight from the dates, on the typical African voyage, is used to finance a cargo of salt from Aden and to purchase odds and ends which might earn a profit in the bazaars of the Benadir coast and Kenya Colony. At the same time, the dhow carries all the passengers she can prevail upon to make a voyage, anywhere, for the Arab of Oman, and the Hadhramaut in particular, is an inveterate wanderer, and every dhow is a passenger vessel by the mere possession of deck enough to lie upon.

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The salt is sold in the best market that offers between the Hadhramaut coast and Zanzibar. At the same time, the nakhoda does what trading he can in anything which he knows, from past experience, will command a market. The average dhow never leaves the Gulf without at least some carpets, allegedly Persian but generally of either Italian or English origin, which are used both as trade and as bribes. Cooking stones, ghee, live sheep, cows, sacks of rice and flour, dried fish, haberdashery of all sorts, brassware, cheap enamelware, Arab confectionery -- all these may be aboard, either as ship's ventures or as the crew's, generally the latter.

Every man of the crew concentrates on goods which can be bought cheaply in the free port of Aden, adulterated if possible in transit, and sold to the Somali or Swahili shopkeepers whose little stores abound in every port along the coast of East Africa, from Haifun in the north (which the Italians called Dante) to Mikindani in the south, which is about as far south as the Arabs sail in these days. Only Indian dhows go further, to Madagascar and the Comorin Islands. Gaily coloured turbans of the correct style

2 Villiers · 7-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

443 505 439 (for the manner of headdress worn in the different parts of Arabia and East Africa varies considerably; what will sell well at Mukalla, for instance, will find no buyers at Kuwait; and the Arab is a stickler for style), sarongs from Java and Japan, amber and artificial beads of the kind the true Moslem loves to fondle, cigarettes in gay packages but of no advertised brand, cheap perfumes (which I have several times seen the sailors laboriously adulterating with water from the ship's tanks), small crocheted caps to go under turbans, money belts, caps of artificial leather and pullovers of extremely artificial wool, veils for the harem, basketware from the Hadhramaut, sometimes a little hashish or *qat*[1] — these are the sailors' ventures, and the profits are their own.

The sailors are inveterate smugglers; almost none of the goods they bring — apart from the main cargo — is declared. Since they leave from small ports along the coast of Arabia where official supervision, while thorough, is not organized to conform with the Europeans' idea of how trade should be conducted, and since so much of their more highly dutiable goods are private ventures, such manifests as they produce to the authorities are useless. The mariner buys his goods himself, and sells them himself (though he does not mind disposing of them to boats alongside). He sees no point in accepting any official interference, and to him the European on the East African coast is still an interloper, recently arrived and wholly unnecessary.

505 484 486 The passenger trade is an important one, particularly in the East African voyaging. Though the Italians in their colonies tried to regulate the movement of Arabs, and the growth of Indian influence in Mombasa and Zanzibar has much lessened Arab trade and opportunities, still thousands of Omani and Hadhramaut Arabs travel down the Benadir coast and to Zanzibar annually. Every dhow fit to go to sea — and quite a few which look as if they are not — carries her quota, and some of the overcrowding is incredible. Among 35 Arab dhows which were lying together at Mogadishu, in Italian Somaliland, in the season of 1939, the Italian immigration authorities checked 4,000 passengers. They

[1] A bush common to southern Arabia, especially the Yemen. The leaves, when chewed, are somewhat intoxicating.

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
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missed at least another 600, for no list which the dhows supply is really reliable, and each ship carries many persons who are without European documents. As a new dhow arrives, sometimes dozens of her passengers will drop quietly over the side and disperse themselves among the dhows already in the harbour. As with the disposal of the seamen's ventures, all Arabs take a delight, regardless of their ports of origin, in the general defeat of European regulations.

II

At first glance, the whole deep-sea trade in dhows seems unorganized and almost unregulated. In point of fact, it is very well organized indeed, and has a tradition going back, probably, some thousands of years. There is no association of dhow owners in Arabia as there is a Country Craft Organization on the west coast of India, for the Arab of today is too inherently disunited and fiercely individualist to make this type of co-operation possible. But he can organize his own trade very well, nevertheless. The typical wealthy business family of Kuwait maintains offices, almost always managed by sons of the house who frequently rotate on the circuit, in all the more important centers of Arab coastal trade. The head office is at Kuwait or perhaps Basra, with branches at Aden (in the Crater, not at Steamer Point), Bombay, possibly one other west coast of India port, and Mukalla. Where there is not an actual branch of the family conducting business on a permanent footing, there is either a trusted agent (probably a relative), or one of the younger sons sent in the trading season to watch the family interests. This, for instance, is done at Berbera, in British Somaliland, which, when times are good, can absorb a surprising quantity of Iraqi dates carried there in dhows. The agent or family member is primarily responsible for the collection of debts — always a problem in a trade which is carried on without banking. A family carrying on business on such a scale will have a finger in perhaps a score big dhows, all nominally "owned" by their own *nakhodas*. The cash resources of some of these families must be enormous, and behind them stands the Sheikh of Kuwait, who was a wealthy man even before oil was discovered in his territory.

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1

repayed, and already was loaded with her cargo of salt and rice in sacks, and some mysterious parcels on deck for the Sultan of Mukalla. All her crew had their sea chests filled with trade goods from the cheap *suq* in the Crater at Aden; her carpenter was at work on a 40-foot dhow for sale on the voyage; and she had shipped several Suri and Omani merchants, from Aden, bound on a general trading voyage on their own account, wherever the dhow might take them.

We sailed first to Mukalla and Shihr, where we embarked passengers (the fare was eight rupees regardless of destination, the passengers providing their own food and looking after themselves entirely) and some further cargo. This consisted mainly of a parcel of condemned dates which it was hoped to sell to the Somali (or failing that, to feed to the Swahili labor in the Rufiji Delta, when loading mangrove poles), some dried shark which smelled high even aboard the dhow, some cooking stones, and a considerable quantity of basketware.

With this lot aboard, and the *nakhoda* pessimistic and depressed at the small number of passengers, though his dhow appeared crowded, we sailed first to Haifun, a salt port on the northeastern coast of Italian Somaliland. There we anchored among a fleet of dhows, and did nothing at all for some time. Finally, some rice was sold, some haberdashery smuggled into boats which the local Somali brought alongside, and lot of fish caught and dried. Then we went on to Mogadishu, running down the coast with the northeast monsoon. At Haifun another Kuwait ship was caught smuggling and heavily fined; and all the Kuwaiti in the harbour contributed to pay the fine. At Mogadishu, it was hoped to land a hundred or so passengers, but the Italians would not permit them to disembark. Trade there was extremely difficult, and little could be done. Some of the merchants left, as far as I could gather, to try to collect debts owing to them from previous voyages. Some smuggling went on (I saw a lovely carpet change hands), some of our passengers melted away and their places were taken by others, equally undocumented.

After a week or ten days we passed on down the coast to Lamu. Here more passengers landed and there was a determined attempt to sell the new dhow which the carpenter had completed. She